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Hours worked continued to fall in December quarter 2023

Media Release

Released 8/03/2024

Source: [Labour Account Australia, December 2023](#)

Hours worked dropped by 0.3 per cent to 5,863 million hours in the December quarter 2023, according to figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Bjorn Jarvis, ABS head of labour statistics, said: "After a couple of years of strong growth, hours worked in December quarter 2023 were 1.0 per cent below the series high in June quarter 2023."

"Apart from early 2020, around the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, December quarter 2023 is the first time we've seen a fall in hours worked for two quarters in a row in about a decade - since March quarter 2014."

"However, it is also important to remember that the last couple of quarters were on the back of particularly strong growth in hours worked through the 2022-23 financial year, at 6.6 per cent. In annual terms, December 2023 quarter was still 2.0 per cent higher than December quarter 2022."

Filled jobs rose by 0.4 per cent (57,000 jobs) in the December quarter, which was also slower than in recent quarters. The annual increase of 2.8 per cent (428,000 jobs) was noticeably lower than the annual growth of 4.7 per cent (692,000 jobs) at March quarter 2023.

"The slower growth seen in filled jobs, together with the continued reduction in hours worked, suggests some moderation in the Australian labour market since the middle of 2023."

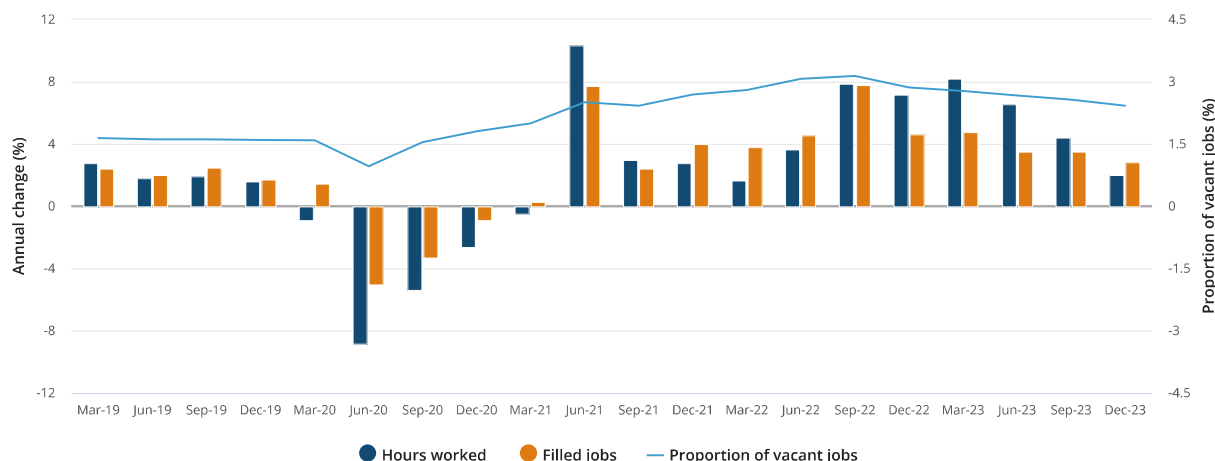
"The multiple job-holding rate, which climbed to record highs during the pandemic, has also begun to stabilise, and has been between 6.6 and 6.7 per cent over the past year. While it hasn't continued to increase, it is still around 0.8 percentage points higher than it was immediately before the pandemic," Mr Jarvis said.

Job vacancies fell a further 5.6 per cent in December quarter 2023, which saw the proportion of total jobs that were vacant fall to 2.4 per cent in, the lowest it had been since September quarter 2021.

"Five consecutive falls in both [job vacancies \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/job-vacancies-australia/nov-2023\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/job-vacancies-australia/nov-2023) and the proportion of vacant jobs shows an easing in demand for labour from the peaks we saw in September quarter 2022. However, both measures are still well above their pre-pandemic levels, which suggests that the labour market continues to remain relatively tight despite these falls," Mr Jarvis said.

Annual change in filled jobs and hours worked, and proportion of vacant jobs

Feedback



Industries

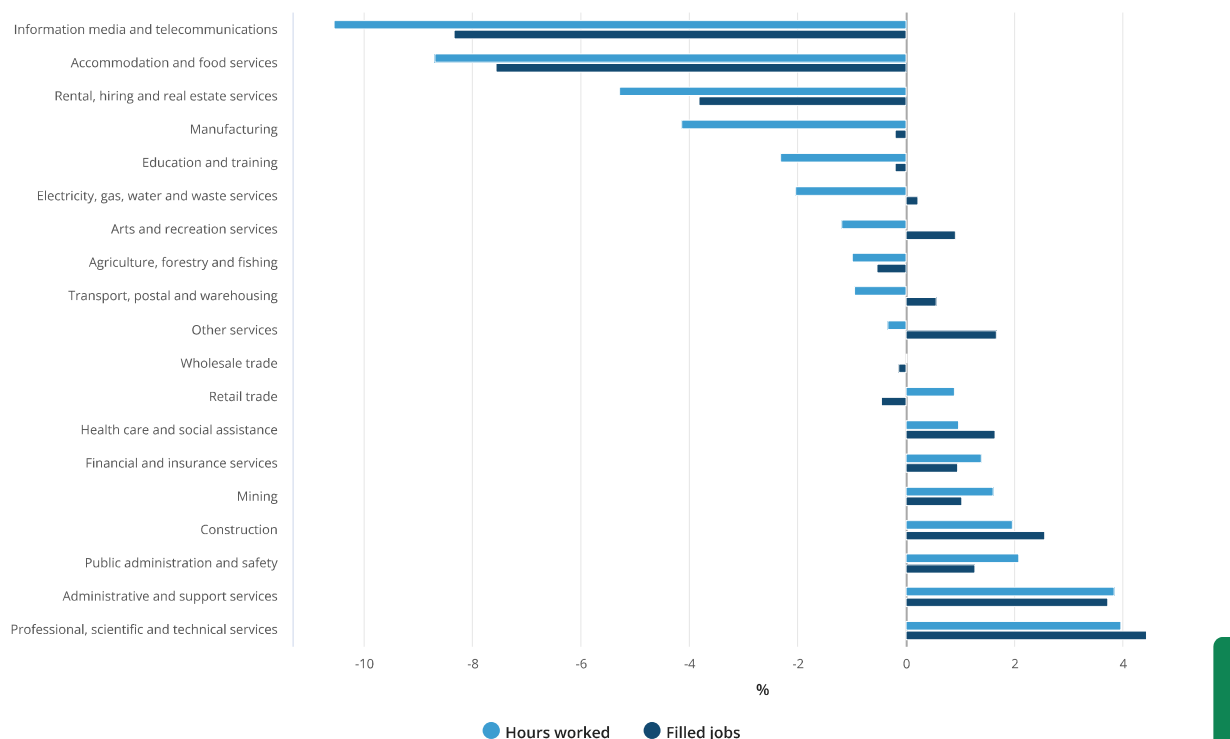
Hours worked fell in 10 out of 19 industries over the quarter, with the largest drops in Information media and telecommunications (-10.6 per cent) and Accommodation and food services (-8.7 per cent).

“Hours worked in the Accommodation and food services industry were down 5.8 per cent from the same time last year and 10.9 per cent below where they were in December quarter 2019. This was the only industry where hours worked were lower than they were immediately prior to the pandemic.”

Filled jobs grew in 11 out of 19 industries over the quarter, with Professional, scientific and technical services (53,900) and Health care and social assistance (38,500) showing the largest increases. These rises were partially offset by a fall of 91,500 jobs (7.6 per cent) in Accommodation and food services.

“The recent drop in both hours worked and filled jobs in Accommodation and food services followed a strong increase in the September quarter that coincided with large sporting events, including the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup. The falls in the December quarter also coincided with the [lower demand by households for discretionary activities](https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/household-spending-growth-slows-december) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/household-spending-growth-slows-december>) like eating out and going away,” Mr Jarvis said.

Quarterly change in hours worked and filled jobs, by industry



Feedback

Lower labour demand was seen across almost all industries in the December quarter 2023. The proportion of vacant jobs fell in 18 of the 19 industries, and 17 saw a fall in the number of job vacancies.

The largest fall in the proportion of vacant jobs was in the Arts and recreation services industry, dropping 0.4 percentage points to 2.1 per cent. This industry also had the largest quarterly change in job vacancies, falling 15.5 per cent. Despite these drops, the proportion of vacant jobs remained well above the 10-year average (1.6 per cent) for this industry.

Media notes

- The Australian Labour Account complements other ABS measures to build a more comprehensive picture of the labour market. Labour Account provides the number of filled jobs at a point-in-time each quarter, while the annual Jobs in Australia provides insights into all jobs held throughout the year, and Labour Force Survey measures the number of people employed each month.
- The ABS reinstated Labour Account trend estimates for the Jobs, People, and Hours quadrants and reverted to concurrent seasonal adjustment across all series in the September quarter 2023. For more information, see the Seasonal adjustment and trend estimates section of the [Labour Account, Australia, December quarter 2023 \(/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/dec-2023#data-impacts-and-changes\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/dec-2023#data-impacts-and-changes)

release.

- Additional insights on multiple job-holders can be found in the multi-source [Multiple job-holders release](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/multiple-job-holders/latest-release) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/multiple-job-holders/latest-release>), which is published on the same day as the quarterly Labour Account. The release combines data from a number of complementary labour sources to offer valuable additional detail into characteristics of multiple job-holders.
- Data contained in this media release refer to seasonally adjusted estimates, unless otherwise stated.
- The extra leap year day in 2024 is unlikely to impact seasonally adjusted statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for the month of February 2024 and the March quarter 2024. This is because the effect of an additional leap year day is analysed and accounted for as part of the seasonal adjustment process, which includes the impact of trading days. The impact of the extra leap year day will be evident in the original (non-seasonally adjusted) series. For more information please refer to [this note](https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/accounting-extra-leap-year-day-abs-seasonally-adjusted-statistics) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/accounting-extra-leap-year-day-abs-seasonally-adjusted-statistics>).
- To learn more about our different labour measures, their purpose and how to use them, see our [Guide to labour statistics](https://www.abs.gov.au/corp/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics) ([/corp/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics](https://www.abs.gov.au/corp/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics)). It provides summary information on labour market topics including [Industry employment](https://www.abs.gov.au/corp/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/industry-employment-guide) ([/corp/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/industry-employment-guide](https://www.abs.gov.au/corp/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/industry-employment-guide)) data.
- Find official images of our ABS media spokespeople, including Bjorn Jarvis, ABS head of labour statistics, via our [new image library](https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/abs-image-library#bjorn-jarvis-abs-head-of-labour-statistics) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/abs-image-library#bjorn-jarvis-abs-head-of-labour-statistics>).
- A glossary of terms used in this media release is available with the publication.
- When reporting ABS data you must attribute the Australian Bureau of Statistics (or the ABS) as the source.
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